

Jesus Empowers Us To Live As Up-In-Out Servants

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Today's scripture reading is from the Gospel according to Mark, chapters 1 and 6 as printed in the liturgy.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. The time has come, he said. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news.

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will send you out to fish for people.

At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay, he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

[1 : 17] Then Jesus went around, teaching from village to village. Calling the twelve to him, he began to send them out, two by two, and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions.

Take nothing for the journey, except a staff. No bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals, but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place, and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them. They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to them all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

[2 : 25] So he began teaching them many things. By this time, it was late in the day. So his disciples came to him. This is a remote place, they said, and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.

But he answered, You give them something to eat. They said to him, That would take more than half a year's wages. Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat? How many loaves do you have? he asked. Go and see. When they found out, they said, Five and two fish. Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves.

Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.

[3 : 27] The number of men who had eaten was five thousand. Immediately, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Christ. Good morning, Christ Church. We continue today in the Gospel of Mark.

And what we've seen so far, as we've been preaching this over the past month, is that the Jesus-shaped life is an up, in, and out life.

And hopefully, you brought your binoculars today so you can see this. You can come take a picture of it afterwards. This is what we've been talking about the past few weeks, that Jesus had this three-dimensional life.

And these three great loves, these three great priorities, that he was up with his father, he was in with his disciples, and he was out with the crowds. And wherever Jesus went, he built community in these three particular ways.

[4 : 28] And this forms the essential pattern of our life together if we want to live as a community of Jesus' followers. And so we've just been filling out this framework week by week, and we've seen that from these larger crowds, Jesus gathered a smaller group of disciples who would live with him in a deeply committed, covenantal relationship.

Not only to know what he knew, but to learn how to do what he did, and ultimately to become like Jesus himself. And it was this way of Jesus that was getting passed on, not just to the first disciples, but generation after generation of disciples.

It was in this way that the early church turned the world upside down. Disciples came to share in this pattern of Jesus' life. They became conformed to the shape of his three loves and his priorities. They saw in Jesus his own up with the father. They saw that he had these predictable patterns and healthy habits and life-giving rhythms of daily prayer and weekly Sabbath and regular retreats. And they said, we're going to start to do that too. And they saw in Jesus that he had this in with disciples, that he took spiritual responsibility for a few people. He began investing in them and life-on-life mentoring.

[5 : 45] And he began to replicate his own DNA in them so that they could turn around to other people and say, come imitate me as I imitate Christ. And people started to do that themselves with new disciples and calling other people to do the same.

And then they saw Jesus out with the crowds. How he was going around talking about this message of the kingdom of God, the rule and the reign of God. And he was calling people to repent and to believe the gospel.

He was calling people to come follow me and I'll send you out to fish for people. He was telling them, we saw two weeks ago, about his power and his authority, as he said, to come and bind up the strong man and to plunder his house.

And so, as people saw this life that Jesus was living, they took on this life, this Jesus-shaped life of up, in and out. And I want us to know that this is Jesus' design and this is Jesus' calling for our lives as well.

That from this up relationship with the Father that we enjoy, and from this in with other disciples, where we're getting mentored and we're getting training, that we're being empowered to go out in service of others in Jesus' name.

[6 : 58] That we're being filled up in order that we might be poured out for the sake of others. And I just want to take some time today to kind of dive a little bit deeper into this dimension of being out with the crowds.

And here's my thesis statement, my golden thread for today. Is that Jesus sends us out to fish for people, show and tell God's kingdom.

And give out of his abundance. Jesus sends us out to fish for people, show and tell God's kingdom, and give out of his abundance. First of all, Jesus sends us out to fish for people.

And he models what this fishing looks like with Peter, Andrew, James, and John. If you look at Mark chapter 1, verse 16, it says that Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw Simon, Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

And he said, come follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people. Now, was this the first time they'd ever heard of Jesus or seen Jesus? No, in the Gospel of John, we learn that Andrew is the one who first met Jesus.

[8 : 06] And then he went and told his brother, Peter. He said, hey, we found the Messiah. And he brought Peter to Jesus. And they began listening to Jesus and his message that he was proclaiming.

And what exactly was Jesus' message? Well, look at verse 14. It says that he's going into Galilee, and he's proclaiming the good news of God. The time has come, he said, the kingdom of God has come near.

Repent and believe in the good news. And that word good news in the Greek is evangelion, the evangel, where we get the word evangelist and evangelism. And what does that word mean? Well, it means to bring news of joy. And this originally was not a religious word. This was a political word. It meant something beyond just the daily news.

It meant history-making, life-changing news, like the birth of a king or the coronation of the king or some sort of military victory.

[9 : 04] And if the king's army won a battle, they would send out heralds, they would send out evangelists with this good news. And they would go around and tell people, look, we fought for you, we won for you, and now you are no longer slaves, but you're free.

That was the kind of evangel that was happening in the ancient world. It's this event that happens that changes everything for our lives. And the evangelist, the kind of news that makes people dance in the streets and hug complete strangers, it's that joy producing.

And if you're hearing Jesus and you're hearing his message and it's not the best news that you've ever heard, then you've not yet understood it. Or at least we're not doing a very good job of describing it to you.

Jesus says in verse 15, the time has come, the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe the good news. He says the decisive moment has now arrived.

God has made promise after promise that he's going to send his king, beginning with that great mother promise in Genesis 3.15. That the seed of the woman will come and crush the head of the serpent.

[10 : 20] And promise after promise after promise after promise. And Jesus is saying now, in this moment, God is establishing his kingship and his kingdom through me.

The time has come for God to invade history and transform the alienation and the rebellion of human beings against God. And he sent me as the king to come and secure your salvation. And notice that this is not good advice. It's good news. Jesus is not telling us what we must do to be saved.

He's telling us what is being done and what is being accomplished for us by Jesus himself. To come and live the life that we were designed to live. To come and die the death that we deserve to die. And as Peter, Andrew, James, and John are listening to Jesus proclaiming the gospel for the first time. As they're hearing Jesus' news. That God has sent his king to carry out events in history for you and in your place.

[11 : 23] That will change your lives and your status before God forever. These four men feel this joy to start welling up in their hearts. And then they hear Jesus say these words.

Repent. Believe the gospel. And follow me. Repent. Repent. Believe the gospel. And follow me. And these are the very first words of Jesus in the gospel of Mark.

So they're incredibly important for the whole of what Mark wants to say to us. And I just want you to know that this word repent in Greek is metanoia. It means to change your mind.

To change your mind. To turn away from all the competing agendas and ideologies. And to open up your mind to a new perspective.

To open up your mind to a new point of view. That is God's point of view. And then Jesus says, I want you to believe the gospel. And to believe the gospel is not merely to intellectually assent to the truth.

[12 : 25] That God's rule and reign has begun in his king Jesus. No, it's to believe is to trust in Jesus as the king so much that you pledge your allegiance to him.

That you commit yourself to him. That you submit yourself in love and loyalty to Jesus. And you begin to follow Jesus for who he claims to be. The way, the truth, and the life.

You see, Jesus is calling these men to take urgent and decisive action. And you have not really, you've not answered the call of Jesus until you've begun to actually follow him in a personal relationship where he's the king and you're the subject.

Where he's the Lord and you're his apprentice. Jesus. Right? Where he's the master and you are his servant who's there to do his bidding. And you really begin to follow in his footsteps.

You say, it's not just that I believe you're the way. I'm going to start walking in the way. I don't just see you as the truth. I'm going to start trusting in the truth.

[13 : 33] I don't see you just as the life. I'm going to start living your life. That's what it means to follow me. Jesus is out here and he's fishing for people. He's fishing for these guys named Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

And he's casting his nets out for them. In order, as the Apostle Paul says, to rescue them out of the kingdom of darkness. And to bring them into. And they began to follow Jesus.

And they knew that Jesus was not only fishing for them. But they knew that Jesus wanted to teach them how to fish for other people. To cast out this net of the gospel. To draw people in to the kingdom of God.

And I want you to know that every disciple who's following Jesus has a share in his outward facing mission to fish for people.

Every single one of us here has a share in that mission. And so how in the world do we do it? Well, that leads to our second point. Today, Jesus sends us out to fish for people.

[14 : 32] But the way he sends us out to fish for people is to show and tell the kingdom of God. The way we're to go fishing is to show and tell the kingdom of God.

From day one, from the very first moment they were called as disciples. Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They know that they're called to share in Jesus' mission.

That they're following Jesus not just to know what he knew but to go and do what he did. And share in his task of fishing for people and joining with him. In gaining more and more disciples.

Gathering men and women and children into the kingdom of God. But what's interesting is that in Mark chapters 1 through 5. We really see the disciples. They're kind of just companions of Jesus. And spectators of Jesus. They're not really quite yet partners in his mission. As one commentator says, they've been extras rather than actors in the proclamation of the kingdom.

[15 : 32] But in Mark chapter 6, something changes pretty dramatically. In Mark chapter 6, Jesus takes these guys who've been passive. And he begins to get them actively involved in what he's doing.

And he starts turning them from consumers into contributors. He starts turning them from spectators into producers.

Before he's been saying, look, I'm going to do and you're going to watch. Or I'm going to do and you're going to help. But now he's saying, you're going to do and I'm going to help. And I want you to think about this in terms of show and tell.

Okay. Anybody do show and tell in kindergarten? Okay. Miss Tindall's class. This is very exciting yet nerve wracking. What am I going to show and tell? And so literally my show and tell was all about fishing.

I took my fishing pole. And I took my tackle box and all my fishing gear with the hooks and lures and lines and all those sort of things. And I showed everybody my stuff. And then over the next 30 minutes I told them about the difference between ancient Near Eastern net fishing and modern techniques of line fishing.

[16 : 46] And I knew in that moment I was called to be a preacher. I didn't know that until much later. But Jesus is calling his disciples to do a show and tell ministry.

And I want you to see that in Mark chapter 6. It says that in Mark chapter 6 verse 7 that he called them and he began to send them out two by two with his authority.

To go out not as lone rangers but have a buddy, have a friend and to go out. And it says in verse 12 they went out and they preached that people should repent.

And they drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. And then in Mark chapter 6 verse 30 it says the apostles gathered around Jesus after all this was done and they reported back to him all that they had done and taught.

They're reporting back what they've been doing and what they've been teaching. What they've been showing and what they've been telling. Jesus sent them out to do what he did and to say what he said.

[17 : 52] Go show them the kingdom of God and then tell them what that kingdom is all about. Go give them a demonstration of what the rule and the reign of our father is like.

And then give them some proclamation of why the kingdom of God is breaking into their lives.

Jesus says to his disciples I want you to go and give them an experience of the power of God.

And then I want you to explain to them the truth of God. Doing, teaching, showing, telling, demonstration, proclamation, experience, explanation.

You following me? And Jesus sends them out with very specific instructions about how to go and do this. He says in verse 8. These were his instructions.

Take nothing for the journey except a staff. No bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Jesus is saying go with integrity and simplicity in your life with regard to money.

[18:56] And I want you to just go live among people and depend radically upon God and the hospitality of others. And of course, you know, hospitality in the near eastern world both back then and today is a sacred thing much more than it is in our society.

To receive or depend upon someone's hospitality is a mark of respect and humility. And Jesus says just go look for people of peace who offer you hospitality.

He says in verse 10 that whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.

So Jesus is saying look, who are your people of peace? Who listens to you? Who welcomes you? Who's open to you? These are your people of peace. And he says I just want you to start to serve them.

Start to listen to their needs. Just go and find out about the pain and the hurt and the brokenness in their lives and begin to pour yourselves out for their good and for their well-being.

[20:02] And look, if you find that they're sick with illness, anoint them with oil and have compassion on them, care for them and heal them. And look, if they're oppressed by the evil one, begin to pray that that bondage in their lives would be broken.

And Jesus sends them out, not in their own strength, in their own power, but it says in verse 7 that he sent them out and he gave them his authority so that they could go start loving people.

And they could sacrificially give themselves to people and serve people and heal their sickness and drive out the darkness just like Jesus did. And, you know, when they go out to do this show and tell ministry, Jesus says this is going to be incredibly provocative.

It's going to be radically attractive. People are going to see the kingdom of God breaking into their lives. They're going to see evil being decisively defeated in my name.

And that is going to be so attractive. And yet at the same time, it's going to be incredibly offensive.

And why is it going to be offensive? Well, it says in verse 12 that they're to go out and they're going to preach that people should repent.

[21:17] They're going to preach and tell people that they need to turn to Jesus as the only Savior and Lord of this world. So to go out and to show people the kingdom of God by serving them, that's incredibly attractive.

And yet to also go out and tell people about the kingdom of God and their need to turn to Jesus and repent and give their lives to Him, that's incredibly offensive.

And Jesus says, expect people not to welcome you. Expect people not to want to listen to you. Because my mission is both attractive and offensive.

And the early church understood this completely. It's why they changed the world. Because they went out and the earliest disciples, they sounded incredibly exclusive in that pagan world.

That pagan world said, look, there are many, many gods. Everybody's got their own gods. It's all good. And their first disciples said, no, there's just one Lord and it's Jesus. They sounded incredibly exclusive.

[22:21] And yet at the same time, these disciples of Jesus were the most inclusive acting people on the face of the planet. In the way that they were caring for the poor and marginalized. In the way that in their community they were overcoming barriers of race and class like was happening no other place in the Gentile or Jewish world.

In the way that they were forgiving each other. The way that they were loving and praying for their enemies. This was the most exclusive sounding and yet most inclusive acting group of people.

And it was because of their inclusivity that they were attractive and they grew. And it was because of their exclusivity that they were offensive and they were persecuted. And friends, when you answer Jesus' call to come follow me and I'm going to send you out to fish for people.

This is what you're signing up for. You're becoming a partner with Jesus in his show and tell ministry. And you're becoming a partner with him in this incredibly attractive yet offensive mission. And so the question is, is that really what you want to sign up for? Let's apply this for a moment. I want you to pull out a pen.

[23 : 39] I'm starting to do this every week. You can see this as a pattern. Pull out a pen. Do something active, right? And write something down on your sheet of paper. And my question for you is who is that one person of peace in your life?

Who is that one person of peace who welcomes you and who listens to you and who is open to you? In their, no, not me.

It can't be me. If you write down me, you haven't heard the sermon yet. It's got to be somebody out there. Somebody out with the crowd. Somebody that's in your workplace or out there in your neighborhood or out there in your network of relationships.

Somebody that welcomes you, listens to you, and is open to you. And just write down that one name that comes to mind. And then I want you to ask this question. How is Jesus sending me out to them this week?

How is Jesus calling me to go and show them and tell them the kingdom of God this week? And if something's coming to mind, write it down because that's probably the Holy Spirit speaking to you.

[24 : 46] What is that step of faith that you sense Jesus calling you to take that's way outside of your comfort zone? That's getting out there like Jesus with the crowds.

And just write that down and go and share it with one or two other people sometime today or this week. Now, to bring this sermon to a close, Jesus sends us out to fish for people.

And how does he send us out? Well, he sends us out to show and tell the kingdom. But finally, he sends us so that we can give out of his abundance. He sends us so that we can give out of his abundance.

And if you look at this final story about the multiplication of loaves and fishes, it deserves its own sermon. But basically, Jesus has compassion on these people. They're sheep without a shepherd. They have no king. And so he's beginning to tell them and teach them about the kingdom of God. And the disciples say, hey, Jesus, lighten up a little bit on the gospel stuff. These people are hungry. And you need to send them out to go and eat and go find some food.

[25 : 49] And Jesus says to them in verse 37, he says, you give them something to eat. And the emphasis in Greek is you give them something to eat.

And the disciples are completely unprepared for Jesus' challenge. You take responsibility for the needs of the crowds. And why does he say this? Why is he telling his disciples that he wants them to not just be consumers but contributors?

Not just spectators but producers. Well, they go and they, it says in verse 37, they said to him, that would take more than half a year's wages.

Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat? They basically say, Jesus, you're asking us to do what's impossible. But that's Jesus' whole point, isn't it?

That until you see that what I'm calling you to do is impossible for you but it's not impossible for me, you're not yet ready.

[27 : 00] Jesus says, how much food do you actually have? And he insists that they go check the inventory of what's available and they come back with five loaves and two fish, which is enough for about five people.

And mind you, there's 5,000 men to feed plus women and children who are with them. And why does Jesus have them do this little exercise of raiding the pantry? Because he wants them to see that their resources are actually not enough.

That they're insufficient and inadequate. Does anyone feel that way today as you hear about this mission of Jesus? That I'm not enough.

I'm insufficient and inadequate. I'll be the first to say I feel that way. But look at what Jesus does in verse 41. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves.

And then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. And he also divided the two fish among them all. Jesus gives the disciples these little pieces of food and then he sends them out wading into the crowd.

[28 : 10] And what he's doing there is he's challenging his disciples to live by faith that he is able to multiply their little, meager, insufficient resources and to make them into much.

And that's how disciple making works. It's only as the disciples take steps of faith in Jesus out into the crowds with their inadequate food that it begins to multiply.

It's only as they go out in faith, in Jesus, that he will meet the need. That he begins to actually meet the need. Jesus says, I'm going to do the supernatural as you walk by faith.

My power is going to go out, but it's going to go out through you, my disciples. Friends, what Jesus has called us to do as a church and as individual disciples, his work in the world, this fishing for people and the showing and telling the kingdom of God, it's impossible.

It actually is impossible and it will take a miracle. But if you go out knowing that it's impossible and you know that you're inadequate and you're unqualified and all that you have is insufficient and you just go out and you do it anyway, by faith, in Jesus' ability, then that is when he begins exercising his power and his authority through his people.

[29 : 47] Look at verse 42. It says, They all ate and were satisfied and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. And the number of men who had eaten was about five thousand.

Friends, I just want to remind us today and build up your faith and strengthen you with this incredible news that Jesus Christ is not bound by the rules of normal experience and normal expectation for what's possible and what's impossible.

Jesus is the one who causes needs to be supernaturally supplied. He's the one who can transform austerity into abundance. He can take scarcity and make it overflow.

He can take your little and turn it into much. He can take the hunger of the crowds out there and he can satisfy it. In fact, we're told here that he can cause there to be even more at the end than there was at the beginning.

Isn't that amazing? Just as Jesus turned those little loaves and fishes into much. And just as God turned the weakness and the death of Jesus on his cross into strength and life for us, so God can turn us little, inadequate, insufficient, ill-equipped disciples into people who, walking by faith, can give out of his infinite abundance.

[31 : 28] Abundance. And that's what he wants us to do. So as we embrace this Jesus-shaped life of up with the Father and in with the disciples and out with the crowds, may God enable us beyond what's possible for us to do.

May God fill us with his Spirit and with his grace to enable us to do what only he can do. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. – Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.

Amen. Amen.